

~~SECRET~~

25X1

24 March 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Significance of Recent Soviet Conciliatory Gestures

1. Since Soviet pilots shot down a British plane near the Elbe twelve days ago, there has been an apparent shift in the Soviet attitude toward the West, particularly the UK. This shift has been marked by a Soviet expression of regret at the death of the British fliers; by Soviet agreement to request that the North Koreans repatriate nine British civilian internees; by a relaxation of restrictions on truck traffic between West Berlin and West Germany and by the announcement that the Rostkeses Canal would be reopened; by Malenkov's 15 March speech emphasizing "peaceful coexistence"; and by a Moscow broadcast to Western Europe ascribing victory in World War II to the "harmonious cooperation" of the USSR, the UK, and the US.

2. The "new" Soviet attitude so far has been reflected only in statements and gestures and may be only transient. The most obvious explanation is that the new Soviet government wishes to counteract the irritation and alarm of the West resulting from the recent plane episodes. It is certainly too early to conclude that the shift in tactics presages a genuine Soviet willingness to negotiate outstanding issues. However, the shift may indicate that the new Soviet government is convinced that a "soft" line will be more effective than earlier harsh Soviet tactics in dividing the West and in weakening the determination of the West to strengthen its defenses.

SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates

25X1

~~SECRET~~

25X1